

NLWJC - Kagan

DPC - Box 055 - Folder-016

Scholars Group

205065

'97 FEB 11 PM 6:31

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

February 10, 1997

MEMORANDUM TO: THE PRESIDENT
FROM: RAHM EMANUEL

Attached is a memo that I asked Sheldon Hackney to prepare regarding different topics for a Presidential lecture series. These topics are selected in no particular order, rather at random by what Sheldon Hackney thought was interesting. Mr. Hackney has recommended lecture IV to lead off the series.

The other speakers he has recommended can also serve as some of the attendees. As you remember, one reason we are arranging these meetings is as a way of courting the historians who currently write on your Presidency. But the invites would go beyond those historians and academics to other influential individuals. We would extend the audience to the press, business CEO's from around the country, and members of different think-tanks.



NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20506

THE CHAIRMAN

February 7, 1997

TO: President Bill Clinton
THROUGH: Rahm Emanuel, Senior Advisor to the President
FROM: Sheldon Hackney, Chairman of NEH *Sheldon Hackney*
SUBJECT: Exploring Ideas in the White House

The prospect of having in the White House a series of discussions of consequential ideas from the frontiers of knowledge is enormously exciting. We have an embarrassment of riches to choose from. I am offering herein six options. I hope we can eventually get around to doing them all, and there are many more possibilities that are just as interesting as these.

Several criteria have guided the selection of these recommendations: the ideas presented should be accessible and stimulating for a lay audience; the presenters should be scholars who have made significant original contributions to their fields; the presenters should be unusually good as speakers and capable of engaging a general audience about the significance of the ideas they are exploring; the subjects must not be in the realm of public policy but neither should they be arcane matters of interest mainly to specialists; the non-specialist participants should at the end of the evening be aware that they will henceforth think about the subject in a different and more meaningful way; ideally, while the subjects will not be the common fodder of journalism, they should have implications for the ways in which we understand the contemporary world, they should be the sort of strategic ideas that help to shape policy choices.

My hope also is to make these occasions exemplars of civil but lively discussion. The White House should be viewed as an intellectually exciting place where people of substance confront serious ideas, and do so with great enjoyment.

Option I:

THE MILLENNIUM

Hillel Schwartz -- Independent scholar and cultural critic in Los Angeles; perhaps the leading authority on millennium observances (of which there has only been one); the author of Century's End: Fin De Siecle from the 990s to the 1990s; and the author most recently of The Culture of the Copy, an exploration of our imitative culture (fleeing our loneliness through self replication) which analyzes books, pictures, objects and individual behavior; I have never heard him speak, but he will be addressing the NEH staff and invited guests on February 27.

AND/OR

Joan DeJean -- Professor of Romance Languages, University of Pennsylvania; she is a captivating teacher (from Louisiana, as I recall) and has recently been working on the "fin de siecle" phenomenon (why do people behave so strangely at the turn of centuries?); she is terrific at bringing history and literature together to bear upon the subject at hand.

Option II

THE PRESIDENCY

Alan Brinkley -- Professor of History at Columbia University; emerging as the leading scholar of his generation on American politics in the 20th century; his special interest is the New Deal period, but he is broadly knowledgeable and is excellent at the Big Picture; we should negotiate the topic with him, but it could well be about what makes for great presidential leadership, or some such broadly comparative subject.

With Brinkley presenting, we should invite at least a handful of other specialists who can enliven the discussion: John Milton Cooper from the University of Wisconsin who is a biographer of T.R.; Tom Sugrue, a younger scholar at Penn; John Morton Blum, emeritus but still vigorous at Yale, has written on both T.R. and Wilson, as well as on the home front in WWII and the period 1961-74; Bill Leuchtenburg, emeritus at Chapel Hill, has written most significantly on FDR, but also on those "in the shadow of FDR"; James T. Patterson, of Brown, who has just published Grand Expectations, a monumental history of the U.S. from 1945-1974; Michael P. Riccards, President of Fitchburg State College, and author of The Ferocious Engine of Democracy, a two-volume history of the United States; Stephen Ambrose, biographer of Eisenhower and Nixon, as well as the author currently of Undaunted Courage about the Lewis and Clark expedition; David McCullough, biographer of Truman and now at work on a book about Jefferson and Adams; Doris Kearns Goodwin, who has written about LBJ, the Kennedy family, and the Roosevelts, man and wife.

Option III

CIVIL SOCIETY

Robert Putnam, Professor of Political Science at Harvard is the man most responsible for stimulating the "great debate" about civil society; his research on Italy provided solid evidence for the connection between civil society and a vibrant democracy; then, his article, "Bowling Alone" started a fuss about whether civil society is in decline in the U.S.; he thinks so and he blames television.

With Putnam as the presenter, we should invite several others who have various positions on the question at hand: Jean Bethke Elshtain, of the University of Chicago, largely supports Putnam, and is the author of Democracy on Trial, which argues against identity politics and for civility and "democratic dispositions"; Benjamin Barber of Rutgers, author of Jihad vs. McWorld about how unrestrained capitalism undermines civil society world wide and thus inhibits the spread of democracy; James Davison Hunter of the University of Virginia, has written about the culture wars, is now directing the "Post-Modernity Project" that has done some interesting polling on the state of our political culture; Amitai Etzioni, of GWU, leading spokesman for communitarianism, author most recently of The New Golden Rule; Nicholas Lemann, journalist who thinks Putnam is wrong; Robert J. Samuelson, journalist who also thinks Putnam is wrong (and also thinks the President and all Democrats are wrong on just about everything); Richard Stengel of Time, who is also a doubter.

Option IV

PUBLIC PHILOSOPHY

Michael Sandel of Harvard is the logical presenter; his recent book, Democracy's Discontents, is a careful critique of procedural liberalism (the state should be neutral as to values so that individuals may choose their own values and their own identities) and also of the republican tradition (the government should work to produce good citizens, which means making choices about which values the government will promote); he doesn't offer a clear alternative to either of these two traditions.

With Sandel presenting, we could get a healthy discussion going by inviting Ronald Dworkin, of NYU and Oxford, who would defend the progressive liberal tradition; Richard Rorty of the University of Virginia, who would argue that we should keep values and religion out of politics as much as possible and staunchly defend individual rights; Amy Gutmann of Princeton and Dennis Thompson of Harvard, co-authors of Democracy and Disagreement, which tries to establish criteria for deciding which things can and cannot be settled politically in a democracy; Richard Sennett of NYU; Michael Waltzer of the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, author of Spheres of

Justice; perhaps John Rawls of Harvard, the philosopher who set the terms of the discussion over the last generation on the theory of "justice;" Sheldon Wolin, retired from Princeton and living in the California mountains, but one of the leading political theorists of the post-war period

Option V.

NEW WORLD ORDER

A risky but undoubtedly lively evening would have Samuel P. Huntington, Professor of International Relations at Harvard, present the outline of his argument in his current book, The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the world Order; the main argument of the book is presented also in a major article in Foreign Affairs, the book is a powerful reading of cultural separatism into the international order (he thinks the core values of the contending "civilizations" are irreconcilable, so we should work out spheres of influence based on the dominant civilizations, i.e. Asian; Islamic, and European); he is very conservative, very gloomy, very much outside the universalist assumptions of U.S. foreign policy and very formidable intellectually; the subject may be too close to real policy debates, but "everyone" is talking about it. We would need to have a strong voice for an alternative point of view present as well.

With Huntington presenting, we would should invite William H. McNeil, emeritus at the University of Chicago; John Gaddis, author of Strategies of Containment; Stephen Ambrose, author also of Rise to Globalism: American Foreign Policy Since 1938; Walter Isaacson and Evan Thomas, authors of The Wise Men, are among the journalists who would be interested, Peter Grose, independent scholar who recently published Gentleman Spy on Allen Dulles, as well as Steve Rosenfeld, Tony Lewis and a host of others.

Option VI.

CONSTITUTION

Gordon Wood, Professor of History at Brown, author of The Radicalism of the American Revolution (1992), would be the best presenter for this session. He is broadly respected across the ideological spectrum, and he has done first rate work on the era of the Constitution and the making of the Constitution. He might well get the group talking about the nation as having been created in a sense by the Constitution ("We the People") and the implications of the fact that America is very much an idea, and that idea is about "self rule." By "constitution" here, I mean constitution with a small "c", the ways in which the society is constituted and not just the legal framework and legal history of the Constitution.

With Wood as the presenter, we should be sure to invite Robert Wiebe, of Northwestern University, author most recently of Self Rule, which is an interpretation of the entire sweep of U.S. history; Jeff Tullis of the University of Texas, author of The Rhetorical Presidency; William F. Harris of the U. of Penn, author of The Interpretable Constitution; Michael Kammen, of Cornell, author of Mystic Chords of Memory; and Bernard Bailyn, emeritus of Harvard, who did the ground-breaking intellectual history on the 18th century background of the ideas in the Constitution, The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution (1967); Daniel Elazar, Director of the Center for Federalism at Temple University who spends half the year at Hebrew University in Jerusalem, powerful constitutional thinker and scholar of covenant theology, former editor of Publius magazine.

If none of these possibilities is fully satisfactory, I have many other ideas. I can also elaborate on any of the above options that appear promising.